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[016] The invention bases itself on a method for the operation of an automatic transmission in a motor vehicle wherein, while a compression coasting operational phase is carried out until the reaching of a predetermined threshold speed, whereupon the phase is ended by closing the clutch. At speeds less than this threshold speed, however, an exclusion is placed on downshifting carried out with an open clutch so that the driving speed is established and/or that gear stage is engaged, which is in accordance with the driving conditions at that particular time. Continuous travel with a positive driving torque can be achieved in the shortest possible time. The open clutch, related to the downshifting in speeds less than the predetermined threshold speed, additionally, assures no brake torque will be generated by the drive motor in spite of engaged low transmission gear stages which is, for example, an internal combustion machine.

[030] A further improvement of the operation of an automatic transmission is to be found therein, that the engagement of the starting gear of the automatic transmission at the end of a compression coasting operation phase is always ended with an open clutch, insofar as only this gear stage enables continuity of travel.

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1-22. (CANCELED)

23. (NEW) A method of operating an automatic transmission of a motor vehicle, the method comprising the steps of:

carrying out a first downshifting operation in a coasting mode;

terminating downshifts in the first downshifting operation by engagement of a clutch located between a vehicle drive motor and the transmission;

determining attainment of a predetermined threshold speed and carrying out a second downshifting operation; and

terminating downshifts in the second downshifting operation with the clutch located between the vehicle drive motor and the transmission maintained in a disengaged state.

24. (NEW) The method according to claim 23, further comprising the step of carrying out the second downshifting operation only during a continually disengaged clutch, if a reasonably great probability exists that a driver has a desire for positive drive torque as well as desiring uninterrupted travel.

25. (NEW) The method according to claim 24, further comprising the step of determining the desire for positive drive torque by an indicator.

26. (NEW) The method according to claim 24, further comprising the step of indicating the desire for positive drive torque by one or more of,

releasing operative brakes,

deflecting an activation lever for a direction of travel, and

using a steering angle of a vehicle steering mechanism.

27. (NEW) The method according to claim 26, further comprising the step of determining a driver's desire for positive drive torque by way of overstepping of the steering angle as compared to a predetermined steering angle.

28. (NEW) The method according to claim 23, further comprising the step of using, for a determination of the probability of the driver's wish for a positive torque, two or more of named indicators or other indicators in common.

29. (NEW) The method according to claim 23, further comprising the step of preventing the second downshifting operation if operational brakes are activated.

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30. (NEW) The method according to claim 23, further comprising the step of engaging the clutch for termination of the second downshifting operation only when a power control member of the motor vehicle is activated.

31. (NEW) The method according to claim 23, further comprising the step of always terminating engagement of a starting gear of the automatic transmission at the end of the second downshifting operation with a disengaged clutch.

32. (NEW) The method according to claim 23, further comprising the step of selecting gear jumps during the transmission downshifting dependent on vehicle deceleration.

33. (NEW) The method according to claim 23, further comprising the step of operating the transmission in an automatized shifting manner.

34. (NEW) A method of operating an automatic transmission of a motor vehicle, the method comprising the steps of:

carrying out a first downshifting operation in a coasting mode of the automatic transmission from a higher gear to a lower gear by;

opening a clutch between the automatic transmission and a vehicle engine;

shifting from the higher gear to the lower gear in the automatic transmission; and

terminating the first downshifting operation by closing the clutch between the automatic transmission and the vehicle engine so that engine compression influences the vehicle;

determining attainment of a threshold speed;

carrying out a second downshifting operation of the automatic transmission through a succession of downshifts by;

opening the clutch between the automatic transmission and the vehicle engine;

shifting from the higher gear to the lower gear in the automatic transmission; and

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maintaining the clutch between the automatic transmission and the vehicle engine in an open state during each successive shift in the second downshifting operation;

determining a driver desire for positive drive torque; and
terminating the second downshifting operation by closing the clutch between the vehicle engine and the transmission carrying out the second downshifting operation.

35. (NEW) The method according to claim 34, further comprising the step of determining the driver desire for positive drive torque by identifying at least one of:

releasing operative brakes,
deflecting an activation lever for a direction of travel;
a predetermined steering angle of a vehicle steering mechanism; and
activation of a power control member.